



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Sawtooth National Forest  
Ketchum Ranger District

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Plateau Farms LLC  
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**2015 Annual Operating Instructions**  
**For Plateau Farms, LLC**  
**Sheep and Goat Allotments**  
**Administered by**  
**The Ketchum Ranger District**  
**Sawtooth National Forest**

**Permit # 3037**

**Prepared and recommended by: Bill Whitaker, Range Management Specialist**

Approved by:   
**District Ranger**

**Date: May 26, 2015**



## Annual Operating Instructions 2015

### INTRODUCTION

**Permittee:** Plateau Farms, LLC

**Allotments Included:** Willow Creek Sheep and Goat (S&G), North Fork Boulder S&G, Shaw Mountain S&G, and Limekiln S&G

#### Permitted Numbers and Seasons:

Numbers; Head Months (HM)	Season; Head Months (HM)	Allotment
Variable numbers and season. Not to exceed 997 head months. 5 horse	06/20- 08/15, 997 HM	Shaw Mountain S&G
900 Ewes with lambs	06/21-08/04, 1332 HM	North Fork-Boulder S&G permit modification 3037
Variable numbers and season. Not to exceed 535 head months. 5 horse	06/01-07/05, 549 HM	Limekiln S&G
Variable numbers and season. Not to exceed 222 head months. 5 horse	06/15-06/19, 222 HM	Willow Creek S&G

#### Authorized Season of Use and Numbers

Numbers	Season; Head Months (HM)	Allotment/Herder, Tender
	Non-use resource protection (2013 Beaver Cr. Fire)	Willow Creek S&G
	Non-use resource protection (2013 Beaver Cr. Fire)	Shaw Mountain S&G
850 ewes/lambs 5 horse	06/13-07/01; 531 HM 06/13-07/01	Limekiln S&G (Julio, Elmer)
890 ewes/lambs *890 ewes 5 horse	06/21-08/04; 1317 HM 08/05-08/07; 88 HM 06/21-08/07	North Fork-Boulder Ketchum-Stanley Driveway (Estivan, Alfredo)

\*Authorized use billing for the North Fork-Boulder S&G allotment includes trailing on the Ketchum-Stanley Driveway of 890 dry ewes to the Salmon-Pole-Champion allotment from 8/5-8/8.

## **BILLING**

**Confirmation of payment of fees through the Lock Box in San Francisco must be received prior to livestock entering the allotment.**

## **LIVESTOCK MANAGEMENT**

Emphasis will be placed upon once-over light use while grazing on the allotments. Carefully review with your herders the Terms and Conditions section of this document which contains specific management standards, guidelines, conditions and practices found in the amended 2012 Sawtooth National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) as well as your Term Grazing Permit.

Reminder: All livestock feed or straw brought on to the Forest is to be certified noxious weed free.

Specific instructions or management actions, such as routing, or areas to avoid will be found in the sections of this AOI specific to the allotment and the band that uses it.

### **Limekiln Allotment**

As discussed the southerly portions of the allotment in lower Limekiln Gulch, Pasture Creek, and a small portion of lower Cow Creek on the allotment that burned in 2013 during the Beaver Creek fire will continue to be avoided by the band of sheep (reference AOI map). Routing of the sheep will be such that the band enters Limekiln allotment north of the burned area in Limekiln Gulch and enters the Cow Creek portion of the allotment by grazing westerly up un-burned slopes in Limekiln Gulch to the ridge that separates the Limekiln and Cow Creek drainages. The band can then enter the Cow Creek drainage north of the burn and begin grazing northerly following the normal routing that has occurred in the past. At the end of the season the band is authorized to trail down Limekiln Gulch road which runs through a portion of the burned area in order to ship at the corrals in lower Limekiln Gulch. Sheep will be confined to the road as much as possible when trailing to the corrals and confined immediately in the corrals. Time using the un-burned portion of lower Limekiln Gulch is limited and should be primarily to provide an access route to Cow Creek and when preparing to truck off the allotment.

**The grazing rotation for the 2015 season on the Limekiln allotment shall be as follows:**

The band of 890 ewes with lambs will graze the allotment from 6/13-7/1. The entire band will be trucked the morning of 7/2 from lower Limekiln to the Owl Creek allotment.

The band will trail/graze onto the Limekiln allotment via Timber Gulch through private land and lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and enter the allotment at Limekiln Gulch on 6/13 north of the burned area. The band will use the lower un-burned portions of Limekiln Gulch for approximately 1-2 days grazing westerly up un-burned slopes to bed on the ridge that separates the Limekiln and Cow Creek drainages. The band will then begin grazing northerly up the Cow Creek drainage. After using the Cow Creek portions of the allotment to standard the band will then graze the upper portions of Limekiln Gulch to the pond in the headwaters of Limekiln Gulch. When the headwaters area of Limekiln Gulch is grazed to standard the band will move to the Seattle Ridge area in the vicinity of the trough. The band will move to the Seattle Ridge trough area no earlier than June 29 in order to avoid conflicts with the mountain bike race event being held on the Bald Mountain perimeter trail on June 28. When the Seattle Ridge area is grazed to standard (approx. 3-4 days) the band will graze/trail to the shipping area in the lower portions of Limekiln Gulch and placed in the corrals the evening of 7/1. When trailing/grazing to the corrals from the Seattle Ridge area near the end of the season the band will follow the route used last year by trailing down the eastern portion of Limekiln Gulch near the headwaters of Clear Creek. The band will be trucked off the allotment to the Owl Creek Allotment from the corrals in lower Limekiln Gulch in the morning on 7/2. When trucking to the Owl Creek allotment the band is authorized to unload immediately adjacent to the Silver Creek Bridge. When the sheep are unloaded they will be immediately moved across the bridge and staged on the north side of the Big Wood River as shipping progresses. When shipping is complete the band will be trailed through the lower portions of the Silver Creek drainage to the Owl Creek Allotment late that day. Grazing instructions for the Owl Creek allotment will be provided by the range staff on the Sawtooth National Recreation Area.

- Be sure to remind your herders to avoid the burned areas in lower Limekiln Gulch, Pasture Creek and Cow Creek.
- Use on the Forest in un-burned portions of Limekiln Gulch is limited (2-3 days) and should be primarily to access Cow Creek or when preparing to truck off the allotment. When trailing through the burned area in lower Limekiln Gulch the band is to be confined to the road and placed directly into the corrals.
- When accessing and grazing the Seattle Ridge area be sure your herder is aware of the Bald Mountain Perimeter trails. It will be difficult for the band to avoid this trail, careful management of the sheep will be necessary to prevent damage. You will be responsible for any damage caused by the sheep to this trail. In addition the band is to be routed well away from the resort facilities and areas associated with them.
- **As discussed with you a special mountain bike race event is planned on 6/27 and 6/28 this year from the top of Bald Mt. that involves the perimeter trail. In order to reduce the potential for conflicts between the sheep and this event plan on having the band trail to the Seattle Ridge trough area no earlier than 6/29 after the race events have been held.**
- The potential of conflicts between grazing, such as guard dogs and the general public

recreating on the district is especially high on the Limekiln allotment due to the proximity of several high use recreation trails and a busy trailhead in the Greenhorn drainage. The herder will need to be especially attentive with the sheep and guard dogs to reduce conflicts while in this area, if the band is grazing in close proximity to system trails or roads. The trailhead and major trails will be posted informing the public that sheep are in the area.

- As we discussed at this year's spring meeting, after grazing the Limekiln allotment, the band will be trucked and unloaded at the bridge near the mouth of Silver Creek in order to enter the Owl Creek allotment. The sheep will be immediately trailed across the bridge and staged on the north side of the Big Wood River as shipping progresses. Immediately prior to shipping please inform any campers in the area of your activities. Ketchum Range staff will post the area a few days prior to shipping informing the public of these activities.
- In the event there is wolf activity that an alternate unloading site is warranted, the band will unload at the mouth of the Spring Creek drainage.

### **North Fork-Boulder Allotment**

The Ketchum Ranger District range staff approached Lava Lake Land and Livestock (Lava Lake) again this year concerning opportunities for grazing permittees displaced by the Beaver Creek fire to graze the North Fork-Boulder allotment pending post fire recovery of the burned allotments. Lava Lake was again receptive to this proposal and it was agreed that Lava Lake had sufficient capacity on their permitted complex of allotments to not graze the North Fork allotment allowing permittees displaced by the 2013 Beaver Creek fire an alternate area to graze pending recovery of the burned allotments. As a consequence of this agreement permit #3037 issued to Plateau Farms has been modified authorizing Plateau Farms to graze on the North Fork-Boulder S&G allotment in 2015.

The following instructions will identify the routing and areas available for grazing and specific management that needs to be followed on the North Fork-Boulder allotment.

Emphasis will be placed upon once-over light use rather than specific dates, or time for each area. Reference to areas or units contained in this AOI is for general routing purposes only.

The band of 890 ewes with lambs will enter the allotment on 6/21. The band will enter the allotment from the sheep driveway through Lake Creek and begin grazing northerly (Dip Creek drainage to the Leroux Creek drainage) for approximately 10 days. The band will then trail across Murdock Creek, the North Fork of the Big Wood River drainage, and the North Fork road near the Sawtooth National Recreation Headquarters (SNRA) and continue to graze westerly on the north side of US Highway 75 between Headquarters Creek to the Silver Creek drainage for approximately 45 days. On 8/4 the lambs will be shipped from temporary corrals erected a few hundred yards north of US Highway 75 adjacent to the Boulder Creek road. On 8/4 the dry

ewes will begin trailing on the Ketchum-Stanley driveway to the headwaters of the Salmon River drainage to enter State/Private lands in the Salmon River drainage on 8/7.

- **The lamb band will be shipped from temporary corrals near the mouth of Boulder Creek. The Forest Service has some portable chutes and panels that can be available for you to use if adequate for your needs.**
- **Compliance to grazing standards such as light once over, will take precedence on how long any area in the routing will be grazed. When grazing standards are met the band will be moved to the next area.**
- **When grazing the Boulder unit only graze knapweed-infested areas prior to flowering. These weed-infested areas should be avoided by the band when grazing down the Big Wood River drainage if seed set has occurred.**
- **Continue to manage grazing to avoid heavily used recreation areas during key summer holidays such as the Fourth of July. In addition the meadows that are used to hold outdoor group events in the Silver Creek drainage should be avoided. This area will be identified in the field by my range staff and Plateau Farms will be informed of any scheduled group events.**
- **Inspections have consistently shown that the springs in "Little Dip Creek" cannot be grazed to standard. Consequently Little Dip Creek is closed to grazing, (refer to map). In addition substantial monitoring will be conducted on the allotment as described in the North Fork-Boulder AMP. We will coordinate these activities with you and your staff.**
- **Please coordinate with my range staff on the Ketchum Ranger District in order to determine the best ways to mitigate any potential conflict with recreational users. Pay particular attention while grazing or trailing sheep in the Dip Creek and lower Murdock and North Fork of the Big Wood River. The Dip Creek area is immediately proximal to private homes. A heavily used system trail and campground is located in the lower portions of Murdock Creek. The lower portions of the Big wood River near the SNRA headquarters is heavily used by recreationists and campers.**
- **Last year conflicts between guard dogs and the general public occurred in the lowermost portions of the Eagle Creek drainage. Please emphasize to your herders that it is very important that they are near the sheep whenever they are grazing adjacent to roads, trails, campsites, or private lands in order to head off any conflicts that could arise between the public and the sheep and guard dogs. The lower portions of the Eagle Creek drainage adjacent to the road is heavily used by the public after watering continue grazing northwesterly away from the road. The band should only be in the Eagle Creek drainage bottom for one day.**



- We realize that it may not be entirely possible to avoid crossing areas that have been previously grazed when moving the band through the allotment. You are authorized to trail across these areas when moving about the allotment. Time spent trailing across areas that were previously used will be expedited as much as possible. Careful planning and routing of the sheep should be used to minimize this practice.
- Faulkner Land and Livestock generally ships from Baker Creek at approximately the same time as the North Fork-Boulder band. After shipping Faulkner's sheep use the Ketchum-Stanley Driveway and one band trails north to the Smiley Creek allotment and a small band south to the Lake Creek allotment. Please coordinate use of the driveway with Mr. Faulkner.

### **Shaw Mountain/Willow Creek Allotments**

These allotments will be rested for resource protection due to the 2013 Beaver Creek fire. Fire recovery assessments and monitoring will continue this year to determine conditions on the allotments.

### **COMPLIANCE**

This AOI is made part of your grazing permit consistent with Part 1, item 3 and Part 2, Item 8(a). **Procedures for modifying this AOI:** Situations may develop during the grazing season which requires changes to these instructions. If this becomes necessary, or if you cannot comply with some part of these instructions, contact the District Ranger and obtain approval before initiating changes or deviating from these instructions.

### **REPORTING**

The permittee is required to provide timely and complete actual use information to the Forest Officer in charge upon request. Use of calendars, maps, or actual use forms provided will be utilized to record dates for turning out, shipping, leaving the allotment, as well as location and number of days of use of each camp and or prominent drainage( those identified on maps)

We need to know dates of entry into each new allotment or major drainage, noteworthy change in sheep numbers, occupied camp or band locations with dates of occupancy, periods, of use within specific drainages, and maintenance of range facilities. Please notify us of significant

losses, from predators or poisonous plants, herding problems (logistical or due to unforeseen circumstances), conflicts with other Forest users, and any other grazing related information you feel is worth reporting.

Weekly reporting for trail information updates will suffice as actual use reporting with the addition of any notable changes in numbers of mature sheep. Not reporting to my range staff: (1) weekly sheep locations; and (2) intended routing patterns could prompt non-compliance procedures. Please phone my range staff Bill Whitaker (208-622-0080) or otherwise provide this information no later than Wednesday of each week. If my range staff is not available leave the information on his phone, e-mail, or provide written information to the front desk personnel at the Ketchum District office.

## **INSPECTIONS AND MONITORING**

Inspections may be made within each allotment to monitor grazing use and insure compliance with the direction set forth within the AOI. Standard monitoring will include visual inspections, compliance with the AOI and grazing standards, photo points, and rapid assessments to estimate use and ground cover. On the Shaw Mt, Limekiln, and Willow Creek allotments, assessments and monitoring of the effects the Beaver Creek fire had on watershed conditions and recovery will continue this year.

## **COOPERATION**

Once again this year we will work in partnership with Blaine County, the Idaho Department of Fish & Game, the Defenders of Wildlife, and the Lava lake Institute in fostering a non-lethal approach to preventing domestic sheep and wolf mortality. Brian Bean (208-788-1710) representing Lava Lake Institute will be the primary coordinator and contact person concerning this program. Emphasis will be on the Ketchum Ranger District, the Sawtooth National Recreation Area and other areas within Blaine County south of Galena Summit. Coordination will be important. Adjustments can be made to routing or bedding as the need arises, to head off problems. Meetings will be scheduled as necessary to assess how things are going or prevent potential problems.

Questions about what can or cannot be done in reference to defending flocks, harassing wolves, or shooting wolves should be directed to Toby Boudreau at the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) Regional Office in Jerome, Idaho (208-324-4359) or Jim Hayden at the Fish and Game office in Boise, Idaho (208-334-3700); Todd Grimm, USDA APHIS Wildlife Services in Boise, Idaho (208-373-1630); Todd Sullivan USDA Aphis Wildlife Services Eastern District Supervisor (208-236-6921); or local Wildlife Service's contacts. Permittee's should continue working with their local Wildlife Services representative on depredation issues.

In order to reduce the potential for depredation, the Forest Service recommends that the following procedures be implemented each grazing season:

- *Keep camp meat in coolers, and not hung.*



- *Burn, bury, or pack out food leftovers, bones, garbage etc. including food not consumed by dogs accompanying the herders.*
- *Bury or remove sheep and saddle stock carcasses from the area where they will not serve as an attractant to predators. The intent of this recommendation is not to require removal of carcasses from the allotment, but to remove them out of areas currently being grazed of areas soon to be grazed.*
- *Work with Defenders field staff, IDF&G and Wildlife Services in implementing other effective preventative actions to reduce the risk of depredation.*

Contact the range staff at the Ketchum Ranger District (208) 622-5371 for local Wildlife Service's contact information.

The Forest Service recognizes that Plateau Farms LLC and Idaho Department of Fish & Game have developed a "Best Management Practice for Separation between Domestic Sheep and Bighorn Sheep" agreement because of the potential for conflict between wild sheep and domestics. In addition to BMP's agreed to in that agreement, we also require the herders conduct regular visual checks for bighorn sheep near the domestic sheep bands throughout the day. We also require that the herder make the appropriate contact with the Forest Service or Idaho Department of Fish & Game when a Bighorn sheep sighting is reported on or within a minimum of one mile of the North Fork Boulder, Limekiln, Shaw Mt., Owl Creek, Salmon / Pole /Champion and Fisher Creek Allotments.

The herder will need to be attentive with the sheep and guard dogs to reduce conflicts especially when in close proximity to system trails or roads. The trailheads and major trails will be posted informing the public that sheep are in the area. The herder will be given additional signs that will be moved with the sheep and placed at strategic locations more proximal to the sheep in order to inform the public of the presence of sheep and guard dogs.

We are again requiring that you provide weekly updates on sheep band locations to Bill Whitaker by Wednesday noon so that we are able to update the weekly on-line recreation trail report. This trail report along with signing to inform the public that sheep are in the area has proven successful in preventing conflicts with recreational use of the trails.

## **DROUGHT**

This season is shaping up to be a very dry year with below average precipitation. Drought conditions will be monitored as the season progresses. Grazing will be managed on an allotment by allotment basis focusing on water availability and soil disturbance. This year's water content in the snowpack is well below average and dry spring conditions are a concern. Due to low water content in the snowpack and dry conditions the possibility of livestock leaving the allotments early this year for resource protection is a possibility. We recommend planning for this possibility.

Due to the dry conditions implementation of fire restrictions will be likely and we will notify you if restrictions are put in effect.

## Terms and Conditions for Sheep Grazing

Following are the Terms and Conditions applicable to sheep grazing that must be followed while grazing on the Ketchum Ranger District.

These permit terms and conditions are needed to move toward or to achieve the desired conditions, goals, and objectives for vegetation, wildlife, fish, riparian, soil and water resources described by the Sawtooth Forest Land & Resource Management Plan. Other than Guidelines, the following Terms & Conditions are binding limitations placed on management actions. Guidelines represent preferred or advisable courses of action that are generally expected to be carried out.

### Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines:

- Only one night/one time use of bed grounds is allowed. (standard)
- Only open or loose sheep herding will be practiced except where site-specific vegetation management (e.g., noxious weed control or reforestation) is needed. (standard)
- Only annual once-over sheep grazing will be allowed, with the exception of designated sheep driveways, travel routes, or where specifically authorized. (standard)
- Livestock salting will be prohibited in RCA's (riparian conservation areas). Sheep will be salted only at bed grounds. Salt will be placed in containers and moved with the sheep. Tarps and hollowed logs meet the criteria for salting in containers. (standard)
- Only certified noxious weed-free hay, straw, or feed is allowed on National Forest Systems lands. (standard)
- Earth-disturbing equipment used on National Forest System lands- such as cats, graders, and front-loaders- shall be cleaned to remove all visible plant parts, dirt, and material that may carry noxious weed seeds. Cleaning shall occur prior to entry onto the project area and again upon leaving the project area, if the project area has noxious weed infestations. (standard) No ground disturbing activities may be conducted on National Forest Systems land without prior approval from the authorized officer.
- New, reconstructed, or replaced livestock water developments must provide access and escape to and from water for all types of wildlife. (standard, reference part Three of the Term Grazing Permit under maintenance of structural range improvements)
- On all lands outside of designated travelways, motorized use shall be prohibited unless otherwise authorized. (standard)
- Damage to or loss of Forest System trails from timber harvest, livestock grazing, road construction, mining, special uses, and prescribed fire activities should be repaired or mitigated by the appropriate party. (guideline)
- Sheep should be routed to avoid slopes with loose soil conditions, active gullies, and snowbank areas that have low productivity, soil puddling, and compaction conditions. (guideline, generally site specific in the AOI)

### **SHEEP HERDING:**

1. The permittee or herd manager will provide sufficient riders or herders to obtain proper distribution, protection, and management of sheep on the allotment as required by the Rangeland Project Decision (RPD)/Allotment Management Plan (AMP) and/or the Annual Operating Instructions (AOI).
2. Do not allow sheep to be shaded or bedded within 100 yards of all streams. If this is not reasonable due to topography ensure that the sheep are as far back as possible from the streambank.
3. Graze no closer than 200 yards from all lakes or ponds specified as closed to sheep grazing in Part 3 or your Term Grazing Permit. This may not apply on all allotments. Check Part 3 on your Term Grazing Permit.
4. Do not bed sheep within 200 yards of designated campgrounds, trails, trail heads, or maintained roads.
5. Graze rather than trail to water, and water at different locations each time.
6. The permittee is required to provide a copy of the Annual Operating Instructions to each herder, and to ensure each herder understands the written contents.

### **OTHER**

7. Permittees are responsible for cleaning or repairing system roads and trails damaged by sheep to the condition existing prior to trailing. Immediate action is required. (standard)
8. All predator control will be in accordance with the approved Predator Control Plan and Federal and State laws and regulations.
9. Promptly remove or bury any sheep that have died within 100 yards or in sight of administrative sites, system roads or trails, corrals or sources of water.
10. Before and after shipping, sheep will not be allowed to graze, shade, or bed within one-quarter mile of the corral. Exception: After leaving the corral, the sheep will be allowed to water one time before departing the immediate area.
11. Control guard dogs when other Forest users or pets are near by.

### **SHEEP CAMPS**

12. Each camp will be kept clean. All litter and unburned material from fire pits will be hauled away and disposed of off-Forest. Human waste must be buried if it is within 150 feet from water. The use of detergent in streams is prohibited.
13. Only existing herder camps are approved for use. New camp locations must be approved by a Forest Service officer.

14. Camps will be kept in primitive condition. No improvements will be allowed. If a new fire pit is constructed, dismantled it and restore the area before moving your camp.
15. Herder camp use will not exceed 5 days per location unless prior permission is obtained from a Forest officer. Camps should be located to avoid conflict with other Forest users
16. At camp, pack and saddle stock will be high-lined, picketed or hobbled. Tying pack or saddle stock to trees at camp is prohibited.
17. Holding pens, corrals, or mangers used for riding stock will be cleaned up when camp is moved.

#### **FIRE**

18. Employees must be kept informed of the current fire danger, situation, and the permittee's fire prevention responsibility. The Forest Service will advise the permittee when special fire restrictions become effective.
19. Exhaust from camp stoves must be filtered through a spark arrestor screen with 3/8 inch (or smaller) mesh.
20. Never leave campfires unattended.
21. Possession of an adequate shovel and bucket for fire control is required at camps.

#### **WOLF Guidelines**

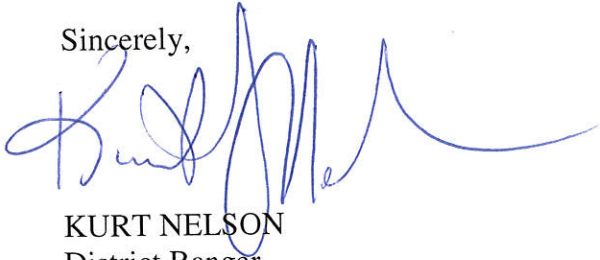
22. The permittee will be contacted immediately when the district becomes aware of wolves in an area. Possible re-routing of the band may be agreed on between the permittee and the District Ranger.
23. At camp, meat will be kept in containers to avoid attracting wolves.
24. Food wastes will be burned, buried, or packed out with other camp refuse.
25. Preventive measures should be coordinated with Idaho Fish and Game.
26. Only bed sheep down for one night per bed ground under normal circumstances. When there is wolf activity in the area and fladry is used to minimize predation, bed grounds may be used for more than one night. If this situation occurs bed ground site selection needs to be discussed with the Range Management Specialist for this allotment.

#### **IMPROVEMENTS**

27. The permittee is responsible for the maintenance of structural range improvements as delineated on Part 3 of your Term grazing Permit. These improvements will be maintained prior to placing sheep on the allotment. Please refer to your permit for the specific maintenance standards for structural range improvements.

We appreciate your continued efforts in good range stewardship and hope you have a productive season.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kurt Nelson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

KURT NELSON  
District Ranger

Enclosure: (map attached)

